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## THE 4-H CROP CLUBS

A radio talk by Chas. A. Sheffield, U. S. Department of Agriculture, delivered in the Farm and Home Hour, October 29, 1936, and broadcast by a network of 47 associate NBC radio stations.

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A few days ago, as I stepped from a train at a station in the center of the great cotton producing area, I overheard a conversation between two farmers. A happy and proud father had just said "Good-bye" to his son, who was enroute to enter an agricultural college. The father turned to another farmer, as the train pulled out, and with eyes shining said, "You know, my son sold two bales of cotton that brought \$176, and the seed out of the two bales sold for enough to pay for picking, ginning, bagging and ties and he had \$16.00 left from the seed to add to his bank account. We won't miss the boy's income from his summer's work 'cause my cotton crop will bring enough for me to meet all my bills and live comfortably this year." There are thousands of such stories from all parts of the United States attesting achievements attained in 4-H club work, that could be related.

The growing of crops as demonstrations by 4-H club members, was in vogue even before the passage of the Smith-Lever law creating the National Extension Service in 1914. In looking over State records for 1914, we find that the State club leaders of 22 years ago (some of whom, I should add, are still leading the work successfully today) reported that only three or four major cash crops were being used widely as 4-H crops demonstrations at that time. The crops mentioned were: corn, cotton, tobacco and wheat, with a few club members beginning livestock demonstrations, such as: pig, poultry, dairy and sheep clubs. Since that time the number of different kinds of demonstrations in which 4-H club boys are interested and participate has been enlarged to cover the entire field of agriculture. Some of the more recent demonstrations to claim the interest of farm youth are forestry, game and wild life conservation and agricultural conservation. All during the 27 years of 4-H club development, large numbers of farm boys have practiced soil building in connection with their crops demonstrations and have learned a great deal about the complexity of soil and especially how to keep the soil in the best physical condition for plant growth. With the advent of the 1936 Agricultural Conservation program, 4-H club members have had an opportunity that is unparalleled in the history of the National 4-H Club organization, to participate in this program, which has as its objective the rebuilding and conserving of the greatest of all natural resources -- Mother Earth -- and the living animals and plants which the soil produces.

A climax in crops production was reached in 1910 when Jerry Moore, a 4-H Corn Club member of South Carolina, produced 228.7 bushels of marketable corn on one acre. Again in 1913, Walker Lee Dunson of Alabama made a new national record when he produced 232 bushels and 39 pounds of corn on one acre. The achievement of these outstanding club boys has been an inspiration to hundreds of thousands of farm youths over the nation

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to aim higher in crops production work, and their participation in crops clubs has enabled thousands of boys to secure funds with which to enter the Land-Grant Colleges throughout the country to study scientific agriculture.

Undoubtedly one of the outstanding achievements of 1936 4-H crop clubs has been the increase in alfalfa, legume and soil-building demonstrations, which supplement the crops demonstrations, and will comprise the more fertile lands from which bigger yields of cash crops will be produced in 1937. Another significant development in 4-H club crops work, indicated by preliminary club reports, now being sent to Washington by State 4-H Club leaders, is that club members are supplementing their corn, legume and pasture 4-H demonstrations by pig, dairy calf, beef cattle and poultry demonstrations. Thus 4-H crop club members are gradually becoming scientific farmers and are beginning to think in terms of not only balanced farming but of the whole farm as a successful business. In 1935 4405 4-H club members kept complete farm records. I might add also that 4-H livestock club members are supplementing the number of projects they are carrying, by producing feed, hay and pasture.

In conclusion, let me remind 4-H crop club members and livestock club members, as well, that "Agriculture is the world's greatest industry and that its soils are its greatest physical asset." The earth is the mother of all living things and is also the storehouse of the materials that contribute to our happiness and well being. May you live up to the opportunity which is yours -- The more efficient application of the principle of agricultural conservation to your crops demonstration work in the future.

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